

133 McGowan Road
Highwood, MT 59450

2/23/07

David Puyear
P.O. Box 1612
Helena, MT 59624

Dear Mr. Puyear,

Hello, my name is Anthony Warren and I am a first year Social Studies teacher at Highwood Schools. I am writing you in regards to the dire situation that many Montana teachers are facing. With the legislature currently in session I feel this is a perfect time to bring these concerns to your attention.

First, many beginning teachers simply cannot afford to teach in the state. (I have enclosed my monthly budget). Other beginning teachers I have spoken with are in situations similar to mine. I will have to work a full time job this summer just to attempt paying down the food, groceries, and other necessities I am forced to put on credit cards; using credit cards for daily living expenses forces me deeper into debt.

Second, as you probably already know Montana is losing many of its young and energetic teachers to other states and/or other professions. I am actively looking for a teaching job out of state and at non-teaching jobs for next year. I did not go into teaching for the money, however I am going deeper into debt as a teacher in Montana.

Third, Highwood and many other schools do not provide incentives for its teachers to pursue professional development opportunities such as earning a Masters degree, obtaining additional endorsements, taking classes, or attending conferences, etc. I wanted to attend this year's MEA conference in Billings. However, I simply could not afford gas, food, and lodging. A second year music teacher at my school attended the fall 2005 MEA conference in Missoula. She had to pay for food, lodging, gas, and the admission fee. This was a tremendous financial burden placed upon her, for which she was not compensated.

Fourth, Highwood Schools does not enforce an attendance policy. Absenteeism is common and many students come and go as they please. We have a large percentage of students participating in sports. Many students miss numerous days for a variety of reasons. Routinely I have witnessed students missing either part or most of the day for various appointments. Somehow they always arrive at school in time for practices and games. I would agree with MHSA assertion that

athletic contest should be an extension of the classroom, with the lessons learned being as important as those coming out of a textbook. However, sports should never take precedence over academics. From my six months of experience here, I would conclude that sports and not academics are the top priority at Highwood Schools.

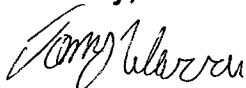
Fifth, I do not have access to additional teaching resources other than textbooks. Having five different classes and inadequate resources to do the job does not allow me to provide a first rate education for my students. The physical, technological, and curriculum needs are not being met. In addition I am currently teaching one class in which I had no college coursework (Sociology) nor do I have a curriculum or proper resources to teach from. Last semester I taught a class in which I took one 100 level college course (Psychology). I was provided with such inadequate support I resorted to making the class an independent study. Our first year high school English teacher has taken on the responsibilities of school librarian despite not having an endorsement in the area or any training working with elementary aged students. Having a variety of different classes to teach is a daunting challenge in itself without all of the above stated factors working against you.

Sixth, without the appropriate resources and appropriate teacher training, I am concerned that my school and others like mine are not meeting No Child Left Behind and Montana State Standards. In addition, without a clear attendance policy in place it is extremely difficult to be an educator and work in appropriate classroom time.

As you can see, it is challenging to be a teacher in Montana. It makes sense that half of all teachers educated in Montana State Universities leave to teach out of state upon graduation. Unless drastic measures are taken to help improve the current situation, more teachers will continue to either work out of state or leave the profession entirely.

If you would like to discuss my concerns further please feel free to contact me via email (awarren@highwood.k12.mt.us) or at home (406 733-2309). Thank you for your consideration, and I hope we have the opportunity to speak to each other.

Sincerely,



Anthony Warren
Social Studies Teacher
Highwood Schools

Anthony Warren – Highwood Schools – Monthly Budget
Monthly Take Home Pay: \$1296

Monthly Expenses

\$310 Car Payment
\$300 Rent
\$120 Propane (monthly average) – I keep my house @ 55-60 degrees
\$95 Car Insurance
\$73 Student Loan Payment
\$57 Land Line
\$54 Am Exp Min Payment
\$50 Cell Phone
\$48 Water/Sewer
\$46 Dish Network
\$45 Electric
\$25 Visa Min Payment
\$20 Disc Min Payment

\$1243 Total Monthly Payments (\$615 goes towards rent and utilities at Highwood trailer)

\$1296 - \$1243 = \$53 left after all of my bills are paid.

***The \$1243 does not include my food, gas, medication, clothing, and other expenses. These expenses are put on credit cards. I will have to work full time this summer in an attempt to pay down these expenses.**

To put my monthly salary into perspective I could make \$1296 per month working approximately 35 hours per week as a merchandiser for Nabisco (this job entails stacking crackers/cookies and requires a high school degree).

At the current salary offered to beginning teachers I highly suspect Highwood Schools and other Montana schools will have a difficult time finding and retaining teachers in the future.

CHEOUEAU COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 28

			Current	DEDUCTIONS YTD	Employer

WARREN, ANTHONY		MEDICARE TAX	26.40	52.80	26.40
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PERIOD ENDING	02/20/07	FEDERAL TAXES	189.35	378.70	0.00
GROSS PAY YTD	3,641.66	STATE TAXES	66.00	132.00	0.00
		TEACHERS RETIREMENT	130.19	260.38	136.02
GROSS PAY	1,820.83	UNEMPLOYMENT	0.00	0.00	2.55
TOTAL DEDUC	524.83				

NET PAY	1,296.00				